



PELHAM CITY SCHOOLS

August 5, 2021

Pelham Family,

Once again, we find ourselves dealing with the impact of COVID-19 as we begin our new school year. Our Board of Education held a meeting yesterday to discuss our 2021-2022 School Operations and Instruction Plan, a plan that was drafted in early July prior to the rise of the COVID-19 Delta variant. For those who would like to review the Board of Education meeting and the discussion that took place, we encourage you to visit our website and access a recording of the meeting here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aX8tA-PyslY>.

Our plan and thoughts moving into this year have been based on the following beliefs:

- We need to return students back to school for in-person instruction
- We need our schools to remain open

Over the last week, we have received recommendations from the Alabama Department of Public Health and other appropriate sources, including consultations with Alabama doctors and experts. We also currently know that no statewide mandates will be in place when we begin school next week. The governor has made it clear that this will be a local issue determined at the local level.

While we are anxious about having that responsibility, we also embrace the reality that we will now be able to make local decisions about our schools. We have a real opportunity to close the divide that exists in so many communities around issues like masks, remote learning, etc. We believe that can be done by pulling together and trusting that our Board of Education and school leaders will work to provide common sense solutions to provide in-person instruction and keep schools open while focusing on the health and safety of our students and staff. In my discussion at the Board of Education meeting on Wednesday, I presented to the Board and made the following commitments:

*We will communicate with local health experts who are people invested in Alabama and focused on the best interests of children and adults. These professionals hold titles of responsibility and are accountable to the public for any positions or recommendations made. We have been in communication with directors of public health, medical directors of disease control, professor of pediatrics, directors of health policy, etc. We are fortunate to have renowned experts right here in Alabama, and locally at UAB and Children's Hospital, and we will utilize those experts. What we will not do is follow advice from TV personalities, guest commentary, internet, and social media sources unless those are vetted by our local Alabama health experts.

*We want a flexible plan that allows us to change directions after looking at data and talking with local health experts. There may be occasions when masks are needed or alternating day schedules are needed, but there also may be occasions when our mitigation efforts can be reduced and those things are not needed. We are encouraged about the possibility of transitioning from one plan of action to another without having to follow the deadlines and mandates of state officials.

*We know there is still work to do. In our revised plan, you will see that we have created six different levels of mitigation efforts. We are forming a subcommittee of our Board of Education that will begin working on benchmarks and metrics that can help guide our decision making and also be made available to the public.

Understanding these commitments and understanding there is still work to do, we must start somewhere. Based on our consultations with local health experts and a review of our current COVID-19 positive numbers compared to last year, **we will be starting the school year at Level 3 Mitigation Efforts**. This includes starting with required face coverings, but also includes some built in exceptions.

We encourage you to visit our website to [review our plan and Levels of Mitigation Efforts](#). Please understand that we are working on the framework to include data and benchmarks, and also understand that we are working towards a common sense approach that we believe will be acceptable to our community.

We will work through the ongoing challenges related to school operations during the pandemic, and we will accomplish much by working together.

Dr. Scott Coefield
Superintendent
Pelham City Schools